REMARKS

Claims 17-32 are pending in this application. By this Amendment, new claims 17-32 are added, and claims 1-16 are canceled without prejudice to or disclaimer of the subject matter set forth therein. Support for new claims 17-32 can be found in the specification as originally filed, for example, in paragraphs [0006], [0007], [0021], [0026]-[0033] and [0045]-[0047]; and in original claims 1-16. No new matter is added by these amendments.

The Office Action rejects claims 1-16 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) or, in the alternative, under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over U.S. Patent No. 6,277,169 to Hampden-Smith et al. Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection with respect to pending claims 17-32, claims 1-16 having been canceled herein.

Independent claims 17 and 29 set forth, in pertinent part, methods including steps of "preparing a conductive metal powder made of a noble metal or an alloy based on a noble metal; classifying said powder with a centrifugal separator such that the classified powder having an average particle size of 0.8μm or less, and a ratio (D_{50}/D_{min}) of a medium value D_{50} of the particle size to a minimum value D_{min} of detectable particle sizes of 1 to 5 can be obtained; [and] mixing said powder and an organic vehicle such that a conductor paste having a ration (V_{1rpm}/V_{10rpm}) of a viscosity V_{1rpm} measured under conditions at 1 rpm with a spindle No. 4 with a Brookfield rotational viscometer and a viscosity V_{10rpm} measured under conditions at 10 rpm with a spindle No. 4 from 2 to 5, and containing the powder in a mass ratio of 80 mass % or more can be obtained." Claims 18-28 depend, directly or indirectly, from incorporate all of the limitations of claim 17. Claims 30-32 depend directly from and incorporate all of the limitations of claim 29.

Hampden-Smith teaches processes for preparing particulates that include silver-containing particles. *See* Hampden-Smith, col. 7, lines 54-57. Specifically, Hampden-Smith discloses processes in which the silver-containing particles have a weight average size of from about 0.1μm to about 4 μm and a narrow size distribution. *See* Hampden-Smith, col. 7, lines 54-57; col. 8, lines 13-25. Hampden-Smith also teaches paste compositions including its silver-containing particles. *See* Hampden-Smith, col. 55, line 49 - col. 56, line 32. Based on these teachings, the Office Action takes the position that Hampden-Smith anticipates or would have rendered obvious the pending claims. Applicants respectfully disagree.

Independent claims 17 and 29 require that the conductive metal powder be classified with a centrifugal separator and have an average particle size of 0.8μm or less and a ratio (D_{50}/D_{min}) of 1 to 5. *See* Claims 17, 29. These specific requirements of average particle size and particle size ratio allow a conductor paste that can be used as a dense conductor film having superior conductive powder fill. *See* Specification, [0015].

However, Hampden-Smith does not teach, nor does it suggest, that classifying its silver-containing particles to obtain a particular average particle size and particle size ratio. *See generally* Hampden-Smith. Specifically, Hampden-Smith does not disclose classifying its silver-containing particles or any methods for doing so. *See generally* Hampden-Smith. In addition, Hampden-Smith does not teach or suggest that its particles have a ratio of the medium value D_{50} to the minimum value D_{min} of 1 to 5. *Id.* Rather, Hampden-Smith teaches only that 0.8μm is a preferred minimum average size and that its particles have a narrow distribution. *See* Hampden-Smith, col. 7, lines 54-57; col. 8, lines 13-27. Thus, Hampden-Smith does not teach, nor does it suggest, the step of "classifying said powder with a centrifugal separator such that the classified powder having an average particle size of 0.8μm or less, and a ratio (D_{50}/D_{min}) of a medium value D_{50} of the particle size to a minimum value D_{min} of detectable particle sizes of 1 to 5 can be obtained," as set forth in independent claims 17 and 29.

Further, Hampden-Smith does not teach and does not suggest the step of "mixing said powder and an organic vehicle such that a conductor paste having a ration (V_{1rpm}/V_{10rpm}) of a viscosity V_{1rpm} measured under conditions at 1 rpm with a spindle No. 4 with a Brookfield rotational viscometer and a viscosity V_{10rpm} measured under conditions at 10 rpm with a spindle No. 4 from 2 to 5," as set forth in independent claims 17 and 29. Hampden-Smith merely teaches that pastes may be prepared using its silver-containing particles. *See* Hampden-Smith, col. 55, line 49 - col. 56, line 16. Hampden-Smith does not, however, teach or even suggest a method for preparing a such a paste and does not provide any motivation to prepare a paste having the specific viscosity properties of the pending claims. *See generally* Hampden-Smith. The claimed viscosity properties, which allow increased shape or printing precision for conductor patterns printed on a base material (*see* Specification, [0019]), are not taught or even contemplated by the Hampden-Smith reference. *See generally* Hampden-Smith.

For at least these reasons, independent claims 17 and 29, and their dependent claims, are patentable over Hampden-Smith. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection are respectfully requested.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance of claims 17-32 are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

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